

**University of Illinois
Urbana-Champaign Senate
Final Information**

HE.01.06 Report on the IBHE Faculty Advisory Committee Meeting, March 2, 2001.

Dr. Alan Hardersen, Vice President for Student Services, welcomed the Committee to Joliet Junior College. He noted that the community college movement has been unique to the United States but now is being replicated in other countries, e.g., China. He cited Joliet Community College as the first community college in the nation. It began an effort to develop opportunities for more folk to enter higher education building on an agreement with the University of Illinois to grant credit to students for some accelerated courses.

The Illinois Virtual Campus: The morning presentation was by Cathy Gunn, Director of the Illinois Virtual Campus (IVC). She is based in Champaign and funded through the University. The IVC is a clearinghouse for information providing a catalogue listing the on-line courses offered by Illinois colleges. Currently, sixty-one colleges, one proprietary, participate. More than 55 certificate or degree programs are listed. To be listed in the catalogue, at least 51 % of the course content must be on-line. Thus, web-supported courses can be listed in the catalogue. Students can be required to spend time on the campus offering the course/program. Currently almost 2,000 courses are listed, not all are on the internet, with great variety in formats and options. The IVC is not responsible for the content and does not control/certify the courses, programs or degrees offered. That is the responsibility of the institution offering the material. Director Gunn sees the key issue for the IVC as determining the kind of student support needed with/for on-line learning. A new learning environment, we do not know how to support students in that environment. For some students it is about the only option they have; others use it to supplement their schedule of regular classes, fill in a missing course, or fit courses around work.

One key to success is getting the student into the IVC using community colleges. Every resident can go to a local community college to receive assistance including preliminary advising on enrolling in courses/programs through the IVC. The college provides support for on-line courses including access to computers, help in getting needed books, help on technical support, and proctors tests. (The latter may involve a fee but any cost is the same as for resident students.) Funding is now being provided to community colleges to support IVC students.

One problem is getting information about the IVC to potential users. Faculty need to know what is available and they need to let students know. Information must reach both groups—a very difficult task. Students are not coming to the support centers at community colleges because they do not know they exist. And, there are huge gaps in the course offerings: lots of similar courses in some areas; courses are non-existent in other areas.

A number of concerns were noted by FAC members: quality control was a major concern. Although the institution may be accredited by the North Central and IBHE approved, there is no guarantee about the similarity of the course to campus offerings, no assurances on the

instructor's qualifications, no protection for students against making mistakes in course selections. The actual number of enrollments, completion rates, etc., may be known by the institutions but not by the IVC in any systematic way. The IVC links the student and institution but has no staff, curricula or student support services of its own.

Director Gunn noted that on-line instruction does not provide cost savings and that faculty work loads increase although institutions seem not to recognize that. She believes a growing number of adjuncts are teaching these courses. She termed it a disaster to force faculty to teach on-line; they must want to do so. Faculty teaching on-line say communication increases and students take more responsibility for learning. There are efforts to help disadvantaged students-- whether physically or financially disadvantaged--to make use of IVC. The students who tend to do well in school use the IVC with ease. Less sophisticated students do not.

IVC is attempting to set up a faculty resource center and on-line tutoring systems. Plans are under way for conferences to help faculty use and to prepare/offer courses through IVC. The IVC budget is quite minimal compared to most on-line universities. This is both a strength and a weakness. It means decisions are decentralized: institutions must decide how their mission relates to the IVC and accept full responsibility for what they offer and for the student's educational experience with them. Issues of quality control, adequacy of student advising, the possibility of entrepreneurial rather than educational goals dominating in some instances arise.

We must learn a good deal more about what is one more delivery method. It will not replace the traditional classroom but work in conjunction with it. She concluded by offering to meet as useful with faculty and administrators anywhere in the state.

The business meeting followed meetings of the subcommittees and a lunch. The Technology Subcommittee will work with Kathy Gunn to develop a seminar on "best practices" for faculty teaching via the internet. The Quality Subcommittee noted the IBHE staff had not yet begun work on the mandated legislatively mandated survey of full-time and part-time non-tenure track faculty and the hope to be involved in the development of the survey instrument and in analysis of the data. Work has begun on a document focused on means of assessment for such goals of a quality education as enhanced creativity, oral and written communication skills, critical thinking abilities, cooperative problem solving, embracing diversity, commitment to lifelong learning. The Budget Subcommittee is exploring compensation issues regarding non-tenure-track faculty and IBHE planning for the next budget cycle. The issue of dual enrollment credit at both the high school and college level for a single course is being studied by an ad hoc group.

Finally, two members express concern about the possibility the Board of the 7 Chicago City Colleges will take advantage of a legislative provision allowing a College Board to use a third party to provide educational services. It is said they will outsource all business functions to American Express (current employee could apply for positions with American Express) and "outsource" librarians and counselors, and the departments of business and instructional technology. This raised a host of concerns and the need for further information.

Ken Andersen
Campus representative to the FAC of the IBHE